

VZCZCXRO7240
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHEK #1366/01 3191011
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 151011Z NOV 07
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0359
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2322
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0744
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2726
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2110
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 001366

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/15/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KDEM](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: A GUIDE TO THE
CONTENDING PARTIES

REF: BISHKEK 1342

BISHKEK 00001366 001.4 OF 003

Classified By: Amb. Marie L. Yovanovitch, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Kyrgyzstan will hold early parliamentary elections on December 16. For the first time, election to parliament will be solely on a proportional basis by party list. The new electoral code sets an extremely high threshold for a party to enter parliament: 5% of all registered voters nationwide and 0.5% of all registered voters in each of the seven oblasts, in Bishkek, and in Osh. Even though 50 parties (out of over 100 established parties) have registered for participation, probably fewer than half a dozen stand a chance of getting seats: President Bakiyev's new Ak Jol party; Prime Minister Atambayev's Social Democrats; pro-opposition Ata-Meken; the Kyrgyz nationalist Asaba party; and the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan. END SUMMARY.

For the First Time: Election by Party List Only

12. (SBU) The December 16 parliamentary elections will -- for the first time in Kyrgyzstan -- be conducted entirely on a proportional basis by party list; parties did not play a role in the previous parliament. Kyrgyzstan has numerous personality-based political parties, without clear platforms or deep organizational structures, and the call for snap elections caught most of these parties unprepared to conduct a nationwide contest on their own. As a result, a number of smaller parties rushed to join President Bakiyev's newly formed Ak Jol party, and some individual politicians have demonstrated their "political flexibility" by switching party affiliations. Parties must submit their candidate lists to the Central Election Committee by November 18, and the competition for the top slots on the lists has reportedly been fierce (and expensive). The campaign, which begins officially on November 26, will likely have little to do with

party platforms and ideas, but will focus on personalities and regional and clan ties.

¶3. (SBU) Fifty political parties (out of over 100 established parties in the country) have registered their intention to run, but many are likely to drop out by November 18, when parties must finalize their lists, which must contain a minimum of 90 and maximum of 100 names and meet criteria on gender, age, and ethnic representation. In addition to submitting their lists, parties must put up a 500,000 som (over \$14,000) deposit, which will be a substantial hurdle for smaller parties.

¶4. (SBU) However many parties run, probably fewer than a half dozen stand a realistic chance of entering parliament. The electoral code establishes extremely high thresholds for entering parliament: a party must get at least 5% of the number of registered voters (not 5% of the number of votes cast) nationwide and at least 0.5% of the number of registered voters in each of the seven oblasts, in Bishkek, and in Osh. The parties with a realistic chance of entering the new parliament are: President Bakiyev's new Ak Jol party; Prime Minister Atambayev's Social Democrats; pro-opposition Ata-Meken; the Kyrgyz nationalist Asaba party; and the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan.

¶5. (SBU) There is concern about another possible interpretation of the 0.5% threshold: that it means a party must obtain 0.5% of the total number of registered voters nationally in each oblast. That is, a party would have to get a minimum of approximately 13,500 votes in each oblast -- a nearly insurmountable hurdle in the smaller oblasts. (Note: A CEC official ducked our question about this, saying that the CEC did not "interpret" the law, it only "applied" the law. The electoral code is, in fact, not clear about

BISHKEK 00001366 002.4 OF 003

which "list of voters" should be used for the 0.5% threshold.
End note.)

AK JOL: THE NEW RULING PARTY

¶6. (SBU) President Bakiyev established a new political party, Ak Jol ("Bright Path"), in mid-October, a week prior to dissolving parliament and calling new elections. Although Bakiyev does not officially lead the party, Ak Jol is the president's creature, and Ak Jol has absorbed a number of smaller pro-government (and pro-president) parties, such as Ata-Jurt, El-Kelechegi, Moya Strana (My Country), United Kyrgyzstan, Jany Kyrgyzstan, the Labor and Unity Party and a few others. Ak Jol boasts several senior government officials and at least 20 former MPs among its members, including presidential chief of staff Medet Sadyrkulov, former Deputy Prime Minister (and current acting Mayor of Bishkek) Daniyar Usenov, Usen Sydykov, and ex-MPs Alisher Sabirov, Rashid Tagayev, and Kamchibek Tashiyev. On November 10, Ak Jol announced the top five candidates on its list: Constitutional Court Chair Cholpon Bayekova, State Secretary Adakham Madumarov, Rector of the Slavonic University and former leader of the pro-Russia Sodruzhestvo party Vladimir Nifadyev, well known surgeon Ernst Akramov, and former head of UN-funded ARIS Elmira Ibraimova. (Note: The names of each party's top five candidates will appear on the ballot. End Note.)

ATA-MEKEN: AN OPPOSITION UMBRELLA

¶7. (SBU) Ata-Meken, headed by former Speaker of Parliament and opposition leader Omurbek Tekebayev, is one of the older parties in Kyrgyzstan, with offices throughout the country. For this election, Ata-Meken has tried to position itself as an umbrella organization for all opposition parties, but Ak-Shumkar (or what was left of it after the White House successfully decimated the party) was the only party formally

to unite with Ata-Meken. Ata-Meken's membership includes several former MPs, as well as prominent NGO leaders such as Cholpon Jakupova (Adilet Legal Clinic) and Asiya Sasykbayeva (Interbilim). Ata-Meken was the first party to announce its party list, and its top five candidates are: Tekebayev, former MP Kubatbek Baibolov, former MP Temir Sariyev, former Bishkek city council deputy chair Tatyana Ponomaryova, and ex-MP Duishenkul Chotonov.

SOCIAL DEMOCRATS: LEANING TOWARDS THE RULING PARTY

18. (SBU) Prime Minister Almaz Atambayev's Social Democratic Party announced its intention to run on its own, rather than unite with another party. The Social Democrats have a long history and are considered to have deep financial resources. In addition to Atambayev, its prominent members include AUCA Vice President Bakyt Beshimov, who has strong pull in the south, former NGO leader Edil Baisalov, and former Foreign Minister (and former Asaba party co-leader) Roza Otunbayeva. Party members have publicly been supportive of Bakiyev and have said that they need to work with power to affect change.

Atambayev, however, will not be on the Social Democrats' list, as he is trying to preserve his chances of being named prime minister once again. Party chief of staff (ex-MP) Omurbek Babanov said on October 8 that Atambayev would continue to lead the government's efforts to ensure an honest election and to improve the economic situation. The Social Democrats' top five candidates are: Babanov, Beshimov, former MP and wealthy businessman Osmonbek Artykbayev, Irina Karamushkina, and Ruslan Shabotoyev.

OUTSIDERS: LOOKING FOR A FEW SEATS

BISHKEK 00001366 003.4 OF 003

19. (SBU) The Asaba party, led by ex-MP and former Prosecutor General Azimbek Beknazarov, has its base of support in the south of Kyrgyzstan. The party has toned down its Kyrgyz nationalist rhetoric, and it has added a well known ethnic Russian, Alevtina Pronenko, to its list to appeal to Russian voters. Beknazarov, however, remains a controversial (and polarizing) figure, as is the party's main donor, prominent physician Jenishbek Nazaraliyev. The party held its conference on Nov. 13 and nominated its candidates for the election. At the top of the list are: Nazaraliyev, Beknazarov, Roza Nurmatova, Pronenko, and ex-MP Dooronbek Sadyrbayev. Asaba is trying to bring in outside figures to its list, as neither Nazaraliyev nor Sadyrbayev are formally members of Asaba (the law allows inclusion of people who are not members of any party).

110. (SBU) The Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan, led by ex-MP Iskhak Masaliyev, has seen a steady decline in membership over the years, but it still counts on support from the older generation, who are traditionally the most diligent voters. Iskhak Masaliyev leads the list, which also includes Nikolay Bailo, Beishen Akunov, Bulmairam Mamaseitova, and Ainash Seitkaziyeu.

111. (SBU) Several other parties have prominent people on their lists, but probably lack the nationwide appeal necessary to overcome the regional thresholds. Former Prime Minister Felix Kulov will head the list for the Ar Namyz party, which has nationwide organization but whose support lies primarily in the north. The Democratic Party "Turan" has former MPs Taiyrbek Sarpashev and Kanybek Imanaliyev at the top of its list. The Meken ("Rodina" in Russian) party has ethnic-Uzbek former MP Kadyrjan Batyrov in the top spot, but the party has little following outside the south.

COMMENT: WILL IT BE FAIR?

112. (C) With the high thresholds nationwide and in each

oblast, it is likely that no more than three or four parties -- and possibly just one or two -- will get into parliament. Most expect that the president's Ak Jol party will get the majority of the seats, whether or not it gets the majority of the votes. Government officials have pledged a fair election, but administrative resources will likely be (and already have been -- reftel) deployed in support of Ak Jol. As Minister of Justice Kaiypov put it, "We will try to do everything so that the electorate supports the ruling party, and we intend to do so in an honest and transparent fight."

¶13. (C) Both government and opposition believe that the election will be a real contest, at least to some extent. Presidential Chief of Staff Medet Sadyrkulov told the Ambassador that, with so many interested parties participating, the government could not get away with "doing what we did" during the referendum (that is, stuff the ballot boxes -- though he wasn't specific). Pro-opposition Nurjamal Baibalova, the recently dismissed Chair of the Bishkek City Council and wife of Ata Meken candidate Kubatbek Baibolov, told us she doubted the depth of support for Ak Jol and that Ak Jol would not be able to get away with "stealing all the votes."

¶14. (C) In a disturbing development, two long-term Central Election Commission staffers were dismissed, reportedly for criticizing the vote fraud in the October 21 constitutional referendum. But on the positive side, the government has invited international observers to monitor the polls, and OSCE/ODIHR plans to send over 200 short term observers and 20 long term observers. The Embassy will also deploy teams to monitor the vote around the country.
YOVANOVITCH